We’re at the height of summer, which means we’re also at the height of mosquito and tick season. Ticks and mosquitoes are more than a nuisance; they can carry diseases, such as Lyme disease and anaplasmosis (in the case of ticks), and West Nile Virus and Eastern Equine Encephalitis (in the case of mosquitoes).

Luckily, there are many things you can do to avoid tick and mosquito bites and stay healthy.

Prevention measures that work against both ticks and mosquitos:

* Wearing long pants and long sleeves provides the best protection.
* Light-colored clothing is less attractive to mosquitoes and makes ticks easier to spot before they attach to skin.
* Spray yourself and your children with EPA-registered insect repellents, such as those containing DEET. DEET has been in use for decades and has a strong safety record. Look for the EPA registration number and follow directions on the product label.
* Treat clothes you like to wear outdoors with Permethrin or buy pretreated clothing. Permethrin repels or kills mosquitos and ticks and it is odorless and nontoxic to humans once it dries. Again, be sure you read and follow directions on the label.

Prevention measures for ticks:

* Know your ticks. This time of year, the ticks to look out for are the nymphs (the smaller, immature form) of the black legged tick, also known as the deer tick. Only black legged ticks carry Lyme, and the nymphs are tiny: about the size of a poppy seed. By fall, black legged ticks grow to about the size of a sesame seed. Dog ticks, which are about the size of a small watermelon seed, are also common in our area, but they are less likely to carry disease. Want help identifying a tick? The free Tick Spotters service through the University of Rhode Island offers tick identification. Send in a photo of a tick and they will respond in about 24 hours.
* Know where ticks hang out. Ticks especially like tall grasses, the edges of woods and wooded areas. Shady yards can also be tick habitat. Consistently sunny spots with short grass, like a recently mowed lawn or park area, are less likely to have ticks.
* When you come indoors, do a head-to-toe tick check for yourself and your kids, including in and around ears, head and neck, under arms, around the waist, between the legs, at the backs of knees, and don’t forget the belly button. It takes at least 24 hours after a tick is attached for it to transmit Lyme and most other diseases, so a daily tick check is a great prevention measure.
* Put clothes, blankets, and towels that you brought outdoors with you in the dryer on high heat for at least 10 minutes to kill any ticks that might have hitched a ride.
* If you find a tick attached, use fine pointed tweezers, grasp the tick as close to the head as possible and pull it straight out. Wipe the area with alcohol or wash with soap and water.

Prevention measures for mosquitoes:

* If you go outdoors from dusk to dawn, be sure you are well protected, as this is when the mosquitos that carry diseases are most likely to be out in search of a meal.
* Use screens on windows and doors. Repair holes in screens to keep mosquitoes outdoors.
* Mosquitoes breed in standing water, so once a week, empty and scrub, turn over, cover, or throw out items that hold water, such as tires, buckets, planters, toys, pools, birdbaths, flowerpots, or trash containers.
* Tightly cover water storage containers (buckets, cisterns, rain barrels), and for containers without lids, use wire mesh with holes smaller than an adult mosquito.

Find answers to your questions about using insect and tick repellents safely: <https://www.maine.gov/dacf/php/gotpests/bugs/factsheets2/bug-repellents-penn.pdf>

Learn how to treat your clothes and gear with Permethrin safely: <https://www.cdc.gov/mosquitoes/mosquito-bites/how-to-use-permethrin.html>

Submit your tick photo to Tick Spotters: <https://web.uri.edu/tickencounter/tickspotters/>

Find guidance on doing a daily tick check and what to do if you find a tick attached: <https://www.cdc.gov/ticks/pdfs/FS_TickBite-508.pdf>

And don’t forget to protect Fido! <https://www.cdc.gov/ticks/avoid/on_pets.html>

Find more information on preventing mosquito bites from the Centers for Disease Control:

<https://www.cdc.gov/mosquitoes/pdfs/MosquitoBitePreventionUS_508.pdf>

Look for updates on West Nile Virus and Eastern Equine Encephalitis in Massachusetts towns here: <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/massachusetts-arbovirus-update>